

RETAIL PRICES - JUNE QUARTER, 1955.The "C" Series Index Numbers.

Index numbers of retail prices ("C" Series) for the June quarter of 1955 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases, June Quarter, 1955.

City.	Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from June Quarter, 1954.	Increase from March Quarter, 1955.
		%	%	%
Brisbane	2,206	155.6	2.0	0.5
Toowoomba	2,247	164.0	2.3	0.9
Rockhampton ..	2,251	161.4	1.6	0.6
Townsville ..	2,330	155.5	1.8	0.2
Bundaberg	2,200	161.6	1.7	0.5
Warwick	2,213	169.2	1.5	0.3

A small rise was recorded by the "C" Series index number for Brisbane in the June quarter of 1955. Following two small decreases in the second and third quarters, an increase of 1.3 per cent. occurred in the December quarter of last year, but the next two quarters have shown progressively smaller increases of 0.8 and 0.5 per cent. respectively. The position, therefore, at the middle of 1955 still suggested relative price stability with a slight tendency to a rise over an extended period. The index numbers for the other five Queensland cities for which they are calculated also showed small rises in the recent quarter, all being under 1 per cent.

Causes of the latest rise in all cities were generally spread over all sections of the index numbers. Food and grocery prices rose in five cities - in none by more than 1 per cent. - and decreased in one city; clothing and footwear prices rose in all six cities, the largest increases being 1.2 per cent. in Toowoomba and Rockhampton; miscellaneous items also increased in all cities, Toowoomba and Bundaberg showing the biggest increase (0.8 per cent.) in these items; and rent increased by slightly over 1 per cent. in Rockhampton and Townsville but showed no significant change in the other four cities.

In the June quarter, the increase in the index number of 0.5 per cent. in Brisbane was less than in any of the other capital cities, the respective rises being:- Sydney, 0.7 per cent., Hobart, 1.0 per cent., Melbourne, 1.2 per cent., Adelaide, 1.8 per cent., and Perth, 2.2 per cent. Compared with the pre-war (1938-39) level, Brisbane prices have risen by 155.6 per cent., which is less than in any other capital city except Melbourne where the increase was 154.8 per cent. In Sydney and Adelaide it was approximately 161 per cent., while the rises were bigger in Perth and Hobart at 188 and 172 per cent. respectively.

Percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39 in food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and miscellaneous items are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, June Quarter, 1955.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1955.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1955.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From March Quarter, 1955.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	194.2	0.6	280.0	0.5	110.3	0.3
Toowoomba	219.3	1.0	276.6	1.2	108.6	0.8
Rockhampton	189.6	0.1	274.3	1.2	119.3	0.5
Townsville	182.6	-0.5	278.8	0.8	120.6	0.1
Bundaberg	188.9	0.1	273.4	1.1	106.0	0.8
Warwick ..	208.4	0.4	280.8	0.2	114.1	0.3

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Food and Groceries.

As shown in the preceding table, small increases were recorded during the quarter in food and grocery index numbers for all cities for which data are collected, except in Townsville which showed a slight decrease. Increases were recorded in prices for potatoes, eggs, and mutton in all cities and in bread in Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville. Milk prices increased in all cities except Townsville where the winter incentive price does not apply. These increases were partly offset by a decrease in the price of beef. Small variations were recorded in the prices of various other items.

Clothing and Miscellaneous.

Small increases were recorded in the clothing and footwear index numbers during the quarter. These were mainly the result of increases in prices for women's seasonal clothing, while stockings showed a slight decrease. The miscellaneous items index numbers showed a slight increase in all cities, the main changes since the previous quarter being increases in electricity charges in Toowoomba and Warwick, and in gas prices in Bundaberg.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index remained stationary in Toowoomba, Bundaberg, and Warwick, but increased slightly in Brisbane (0.2 per cent.), Rockhampton (1.2 per cent.), and Townsville (1.1 per cent.).

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in June quarter, 1955, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	7 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	9 $\frac{1}{4}$		19	9 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	6
Rockhampton	1	0	5	1	0	7		19	5	1	0	1	1	1	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
Townsville	1	1	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	2	0
Bundaberg ..		19	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	8 $\frac{3}{4}$		16	4 $\frac{3}{4}$		19	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	5
Warwick ..	1	0	0 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	8 $\frac{3}{4}$		15	8 $\frac{1}{2}$		19	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	5 $\frac{1}{2}$

In relation to Brisbane, the prices of all groups together increased in Toowoomba (1d. in the £) and Rockhampton ($\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £), decreased in Townsville ($\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £) and Warwick ($\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £), and remained unchanged in Bundaberg during the quarter. Townsville remained the dearest city of those included in the survey, while Bundaberg was still the cheapest and the only city where retail prices were lower than in Brisbane, the amount required to purchase goods costing £1 in Brisbane being only 19s. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. compared with £1 1s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in Townsville.

The relative prices of food and groceries in each of the five provincial cities remained higher than in Brisbane. During June quarter the excess over Brisbane prices increased in Toowoomba (1d. in the £), but decreased in the other four cities by amounts ranging from 3d. in the £ in Townsville to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Warwick. Townsville remained the city with highest food prices, food and groceries there costing 7.2 per cent. more than in Brisbane.

During the quarter relative prices of clothing and footwear increased by $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £ in Townsville, 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Toowoomba, and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Rockhampton and Bundaberg. Warwick recorded a decrease of $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £. Clothing and footwear prices are much more uniform throughout the State than prices of commodities in other sections of the index, and in the recent quarter the largest deviation from Brisbane prices was an excess of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Townsville.

Miscellaneous items are more expensive in all five provincial cities than in Brisbane. The additional costs varied during June quarter by amounts ranging from a decrease of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ in Townsville to an increase of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Bundaberg.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953.

The future of basic wage adjustments was under consideration in several States at 1st August, 1955. The position in the various States was then as follows. State Industrial Courts in New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia had not made any basic wage adjustments since their declarations following the publication of index numbers for the June quarter of 1953. In Western Australia, the State Court on 9th August, 1955, made a basic wage adjustment following the publication of the June index number, the increase to operate forthwith. The adjusted wage rates are shown in the table below. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, special legislation required the continuation of the automatic adjustment of wage rates in accordance with variations in retail price index numbers. Subsequent variations in the Melbourne index numbers had caused a net increase of 5s. in the basic rate for males up to the June quarter of 1955. In Tasmania, where rates are also controlled by Wages Boards, an adjustment of 10s. which operated after the publication of the September quarter index numbers early in November, 1953, was cancelled from 9th December, 1953, and the rates remained at their August 1953 level.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September quarter of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females, and, following the publication of the December quarter 1953 index numbers, a further increase of 3s. for males and 2s. for females was made. During the next six quarters, the "C" Series index number for Brisbane recorded four small upward movements and two small downward movements, and the Court made no adjustment in the basic wage until after the publication of the index number for the June quarter of 1955, when an increase of 2s. for males and of 1s. 6d. for females was awarded.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series).			Commonwealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.			
	June Quarter, 1953.	March Quarter, 1955.	June Quarter, 1955.	Males. ^a			Males.	Females.	Date of Operation. ^b	
				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2,115	2,195	2,206	10	18	0	11	7	0	1. 8. 55
Sydney	2,360	2,405	2,423	12	3	0	12	3	0	Aug., 1953
Melbourne	2,279	2,302	2,329	11	15	0	12	0	0	Aug., 1955 ^c
Adelaide	2,238	2,310	2,352	11	11	0	11	11	0	Aug., 1953
Perth	2,290	2,514	2,569	11	16	0	12	12	5	9. 8. 55
Hobart	2,351	2,415	2,438	12	2	0	12	2	0	Aug., 1953 ^c

a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

c No State wage actually declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed to a large extent until August, 1953. For subsequent adjustment see above.

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BRISBANE.

10th August, 1955.

Table 1 - The "C" Series Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended June, 1955.	Quarter Ended -				
				June, 1954.	Sept., 1954.	Dec., 1954.	March, 1955.	June, 1955.
Brisbane	863	1,079	2,182	2,163	2,150	2,178	2,195	2,206
Toowoomba	851	1,092	2,210	2,197	2,173	2,191	2,227	2,247
Rockhampton	861	1,084	2,220	2,215	2,191	2,198	2,238	2,251
Townsville	912	1,119	2,300	2,288	2,270	2,275	2,326	2,330
Bundaberg	841	1,059	2,173	2,163	2,144	2,161	2,188	2,200
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	1,082	2,194	2,177	2,162	2,186	2,209	2,220
Warwick	822	1,073	2,193	2,180	2,168	2,183	2,207	2,213

Table 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended June, 1955.	Quarter Ended -				
				June, 1954.	Sept., 1954.	Dec., 1954.	March, 1955.	June, 1955.
Brisbane	856	971	2,470	2,440	2,404	2,456	2,502	2,518
Toowoomba	814	1,010	2,526	2,498	2,453	2,480	2,572	2,599
Rockhampton	895	1,012	2,546	2,573	2,504	2,498	2,590	2,592
Townsville	955	1,057	2,657	2,666	2,610	2,607	2,712	2,699
Bundaberg	903	1,027	2,560	2,544	2,495	2,530	2,606	2,609
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	984	2,495	2,472	2,431	2,473	2,530	2,544
Warwick	846	1,000	2,563	2,541	2,509	2,536	2,599	2,609

Table 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended June, 1955.	Quarter Ended -				
				June, 1954.	Sept., 1954.	Dec., 1954.	March, 1955.	June, 1955.
Brisbane	829	1,454	3,132	3,117	3,109	3,135	3,133	3,150
Toowoomba	829	1,429	3,097	3,108	3,083	3,097	3,086	3,122
Rockhampton	845	1,477	3,125	3,089	3,093	3,116	3,127	3,163
Townsville	840	1,457	3,154	3,129	3,130	3,146	3,156	3,182
Bundaberg	839	1,447	3,103	3,081	3,081	3,100	3,098	3,133
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	831	1,454	3,130	3,114	3,107	3,131	3,130	3,151
Warwick	825	1,441	3,130	3,112	3,107	3,133	3,137	3,142